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ABSTRACT

The Teenage Parent Center of the Single Parent Assistance, Counseling and Education Project was developed to support, guide, and direct adolescent mothers, pregnant teenagers, and teens at risk of becoming parents through successful completion of a high school diploma or school year in a vocational setting in Middlesex County, New Jersey. The program's ultimate goal was to increase the economic self-sufficiency of single adolescent parents living in the area. During its first year of operation, the program encouraged over 75 clients to remain in or enroll in vocational training. The project supportive services coordinator performed case management activities to ensure that clients were provided with any of the following services that they needed: child care information and assistance; health, mental health, and social agency referral; academic and personal counseling, daily attendance support and encouragement to stay in school; meetings with other students and parents; parenting skills training; information on nontraditional vocational programs and occupations; training in job search skills and resume writing; and job placement. The project also maintains an ongoing recruitment campaign that is coordinated with local social agencies, hospitals, and schools. (MN)

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Annual Report
FY 86-87

Teenage Parent Center
of the
Single Parent Assistance, Counseling and Education Project

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"SPH Purpose Area"
Single Parents and Homemakers
(Model Vocational Programs for Adolescent Parents)

ABSTRACT

The Teenage Parent Center of the Single Parent Assistance, Counseling and Education Project supported, guided and directed adolescent mothers, pregnant teenagers and teens-at-risk of parenthood in Middlesex County to successful completion of high school diploma or school year in a vocational setting. The program was designed to help to break the trend of teen mothers raising babies alone in poverty and on welfare by enrolling and retaining until graduation that target population in vocational training at one of five Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools. The whole thrust of this model pilot program is "Vocational Excellence: Key to the Future of Teenage Parents." The goal of the program is to increase economic self-sufficiency for single adolescent parents.

During its first year the Teenage Parent Center, located at the Piscataway Campus, encouraged over 75 clients to remain or enroll in vocational training. The support services coordinator of the Teenage Parent Center did case management, making sure that adolescent parents, pregnant teenagers or teens-at-risk received the services that they needed in order to stay in school. Also an ongoing recruitment effort was coordinated with local social agencies, hospitals, and schools to advise out-of-school teen mothers about vocational training and job opportunities and to re-enroll them in a vocational program.

Support systems such as the Teenage Parent Center increased school completion and employability for pregnant teenagers and teenage parents. Special services available to pregnant teenagers, teen parents and teens-at-risk of parenthood included, child care information and assistance; health, mental health, and social agency referral, if necessary; academic and personal counseling; daily attendance support and help to stay in school; vocational training and high school diploma; teen parent meetings with students and/or parents; parenting skills training; information on non-traditional vocational programs and occupations; and job search skills, resume' writing and job placement.

While the Teenage Parent Center of the Single Parent Assistance, Counseling and Education Project successfully met the needs of pregnant teenagers and teenage parents, it also strived to educate young women about the seriousness and responsibilities attached to parenting. Only one client (about 1%) became pregnant a second time, and she is committed to complete her high school education.

Teenage Parent Center of the Single Parents
Assistance, Counseling, and Education Project

Program Goals:

To increase economic self-sufficiency, reduce welfare dependence and facilitate development of productive and satisfying employment for single adolescent parents and pregnant teenagers.

Objectives for Participants

The Teenage Parent Center (TPC) of the Single Parents Assistance, Counseling and Education Project stressed teenagers personal commitments to vocational education, marketable skills, and job placement, especially in non-traditional areas.

1. The Teenage Parent Center aimed to help 30 pregnant teenagers and teen mothers in school to successful completion of their high school diplomas.
2. In addition, the Teenage Parent Center provided information and advisement to 60 out-of-school teen mothers about vocational training and job opportunities, for the purpose of re-enrolling 30 of them.

Implementation to Help Participants Reach Objectives

- Obj. 1.1 Outreach performed by Teenage Parent Center coordinator to inform out-of-school single teen parents and pregnant teenagers about the value of a high school diploma from a vocational school.
- Obj. 1.2 Information and referral as needed to support training with resources and services, including child care or transportation.
- Obj. 1.3 Workshops, conferences and/or seminars with teachers, counselors and parents to increase successful participation in non-traditional vocational programs.
- Obj. 1.4 Career counseling and assessment which enable participants to identify skills, set goals, obtain vocational information, learn job search techniques and overcome the effects of sex stereotyping.
- Obj. 1.5 Pre-vocational (when necessary) and vocational training at Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools and Adult Technical Schools.
- Obj. 1.6 Employment assistance after graduation through the Teenage Parent Center.
- Obj. 1.7 Documentation of services to each participant, including child care or transportation.

Method of Determining That Objectives Have Been Achieved

- Obj. 2.1 To certify that 30 pregnant teenagers and single adolescent parents have successfully completed the school year until high school graduation.
- Obj. 2.2 To certify that 60 out-of-school single adolescent parents and pregnant teenagers received career awareness and that 30 of them are re-enrolled into vocational school.
- Obj. 2.3 To survey each participant at the end of the school year to determine the quality of assistance received through the Teenage Parent Center in overcoming obstacles to successful completion of the school year or high school diploma.

Management Plan

The Teenage Parent Center of the Single Parents Assistance, Counseling and Education Project is a program designed to help break the trend toward single teen mothers raising children in poverty and on welfare by establishing replicable model programs in and out of school to increase the job skill level, employability, and life skill level of teen parents.

GOAL: To keep 30 teen mothers and pregnant teens in school to successful completion of diploma and attainment of marketable skills level and to provide information and advisement to 60 out-of-school teen mothers about training and job opportunities and to re-enroll 30 of those in vocational training programs.

Objective

Activities	Number Projected	Final Number
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1. Create advisory committee.

10-14

13

Identified and invited 13 school and community resource people who added concrete support and served as advisors to participants.

The Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools Women's Programs Advisory Committee represented a wide spectrum of agencies, employers, clientele, and resources. Together with the Women's Program Specialists they provided a network of referral, outreach to our communities, public relations, support services and employment.

Advisory Committee consisted of:

DR. J. HENRY ZANZALARI, Superintendent, Middlesex County Vocational-Technical High Schools; DR. KAREN McCLOUD, Principal-New Brunswick Vocational-Technical School, Director of Women's Programs, Middlesex County Vocational-Technical Schools; ANGELA B. MACKARONIS, Director, Middlesex County Board of Social Services; BETTY STREET, President, Middlesex County Council of Parent and Teacher Association, Inc.; DEBRA WELLS, Social Worker, Middlesex County Board of Social Services; GREGORY J. LEVINE, Assistant Administrative Supervisor, Middlesex County Board of Social Services; JAY ZIZNEWSKI, ESQUIRE, Toolan, Abbott, Domenichetti, Ziznewski; JULIE FIGUEROA, President, Puerto Rican Women's Club; KAREN GLASS, CAPS Social Worker, St. Peter's Medical Center, New Brunswick; LAWRENCE H. KRAMPF, President, Krampf Communications; LYDIA TRINIDAD, Executive Director, Puerto Rican Association for Human Development; YVETTE FORDHAM, Civic League of Greater New Brunswick; YVONNE CAMPIS, Outreach Daycare Coordinator, Puerto Rican Association for Human Development.

Advisory Committee Meetings were held on September 24, 1986; February 20, 1987; March 31, 1987 and May 13, 1987.

	Number Projected	Final Number
2. <u>Enroll and maintain in program 30 pregnant teens and teen mothers.</u>	30	37*

Possible participants were identified with the help of school personnel in the Middlesex County Vocational Schools in Piscataway, Woodbridge, New Brunswick, East Brunswick, and Perth Amboy. Information on the Teen Parent Program was disseminated to high school principals and administrators at the initial staff meeting in August of 1986 and to guidance counselors at the monthly guidance meeting in October, 1986.

Clients of the Teen Parent Center were counseled and assessed at the initial intake meeting. The purpose of the program was thoroughly explained to each individual at that time. Any obstacles to receiving a diploma or continuing the school year were discussed at that initial meeting. Goals and plans for continuing vocational training were established. Parents were involved in the new program, as required.

Students and coordinator worked up a written agreement about what was expected of client in terms of school work, attendance, grades, meetings, etc. That agreement was reviewed throughout the school year.

In addition, five more clients were identified early in the school year, increasing the number to 42. However, one teen mother moved to Essex County and a pregnant teen moved to California. Another teen mother left vocational training to pursue a G.E.D. And, two pregnant teens left for personal reasons.

	Number Projected	Final Number
3. <u>Provide necessary support to 30 teens.</u>	30	76

The Teen Parent Center coordinator saw over 75 pregnant teens, teen parents, and teens-at-risk of parenthood during the school year 1986-87; there were more than 300 individual counseling sessions. Clients' needs were identified and any barriers to success in vocational education were discussed.

Academic counseling took place, as needed, throughout the school year. In addition, quarterly academic counseling sessions took place during the middle of each marking level and after quarterly report card grades were issued. For those students who failed one or more subjects, a plan for success in that subject followed the identification of problems in that content/shop area; i.e., low test scores, incompleteness of homework assignments, lack of appropriate study skills, attendance, etc.

School attendance support was provided by the coordinator who checked and monitored teen parent clients' attendance on a daily basis. Parents/guardians became involved in ameliorating attendance problems of teen parents and pregnant teens, although in some instances parents/guardians justified teen parents and pregnant teenagers' absences. However, school attendance support was especially helpful to those emancipated minors who needed personal support, guidance, and a sense of caring for their welfare that was absent in their home. Coordinator's enthusiasm for the safety, well-being and education of the teen mother and pregnant teen made an impact on the affective component of their life.

The coordinator also assisted with finding resources for transportation, child care, and health services. The CAPS program (Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Program) of St. Peter's Medical Center connected with the Teen Parent Center. The social worker at the hospital and support services coordinator kept regular contacts to verify pregnant teens' attendance at the clinic and for prenatal referral.

Child care stipends assisted 22 women and enabled them to attend vocational school. The Greater New Brunswick Day Care Center in New Brunswick assisted many teen parent clients, residing in New Brunswick.

The coordinator worked with the day care director to confirm enrollment and attendance in school, a pre-requisite for eligibility for high school students. However, when a teen parent's child was ill, day care could not be utilized. The coordinator stressed to teen mothers that it was imperative to locate and commission a secondary babysitter for those days. In some cases, school attendance suffered when the teen mother's child was ill.

The school district assisted with transportation to and from school. In cases where the child's day care was outside the home, students could establish a bus route closer to the day care center or babysitter's home.

When necessary, teens were informed of and referred to community network of resources; Middlesex County Board of Social Services Program-Advance; CARRI (Children at Risk - Resources and Intervention) at the University of Medicine and Dentistry, Community Mental Health Center in Piscataway; DYFS (Division of Youth and Family Services) Adolescent Program; WIC (Women, Infants and Children) food and nutrition program; YMCA of Central Jersey's Teen Parent Program; Middlesex-Somerset Chapter of National Association of Black Social Workers-Mentors for Adolescent Parents Project; etc. While the Teen Parent Center assisted its clients during the school day, the community network of resources offered additional support and assistance, after school and/or evenings.

With the assistance of DYFS, one pregnant teen with parental approval lived and studied at the Florence Crittenton Home (a home for single pregnant mothers) in Trenton until delivery. She then returned home for one month and re-enrolled at the Middlesex County Vocational School in Piscataway.

	Number Projected	Final Number
4. <u>Establish and maintain support group(s) for all participants.</u>	30	42

Twelve formal meetings were arranged during the 1986-87 school year for pregnant teens, teen parents and teens-at-risk of parenthood. Meetings were well-attended and interest level was high.

In November of 1986 the Teen Parent Center sponsored its first "Special Nutrition for Pregnant Teens" seminar. A nutritious lunch was prepared by our pregnant students with the assistance of Marilyn Siegler, a dietician and instructional specialist with the New Jersey Department of Education. Students also learned about RDA's (Recommended Daily Allowances) for pregnant teens. Theme of this meeting was "Healthy Mothers produce Healthy Babies."

In April of 1987 the TPC coordinator held two meetings that addressed 1) parenting and the problems of teenage parents, 2) values and the work ethic, 3) women in the workforce and 4) positive characteristics for workers.

In May of 1987 two meetings coordinated with the Association of Children of New Jersey and the University of Medicine and Dentistry. Dr. Janet Haskell, M.D., spoke to teen mothers and pregnant teens about 1) childhood diseases and 2) accident prevention.

Also, in February and March of 1987 the Teen Parent Center sponsored seven meetings on Fridays that related to Family Life during health classes. About 110 students attended all seven sessions. Two health educators from the Planned Parenthood league addressed the following topics: 1) Life Spaces: Where Are You Now and Where Do You Want to Be in Five Years? Teenage pregnancy was discussed as often being an obstacle in completing high school, getting a good job and preparing oneself economically for the responsibilities of adulthood. 2) High Risk, Low Risk and No Risk Sex. This meeting stressed that there is virtually no safe time to have sex without consequences. 3) Excuses, Excuses, Excuses. This class concentrated on reasons why teenagers get pregnant.

4) Birth Control. This class was informational and statistical. 5) AIDS. Students learned about prevention, causes and effects. 6) STD's. This meeting informed students about sexually transmitted diseases, symptoms, preventions, causes and effects. 7) Questions, Answers, and Evaluation. Last class was an open forum for students to ask any Family Life related questions. Feedback on the program was unanimously positive, especially in the content areas of STD's.

Less formal meetings took place regularly in the Teen Parent Center. Students, especially seniors, were counseled on job readiness, confidence building, options and opportunities in the world of work. Coordinator assisted students with job search skills, resume' writing and job placement.

	Number Projected	Final Number
5. Establish meetings for parents of participants to help them deal affectively to create a better atmosphere for the pregnant teenager and teen mother.		
	30	32
Parents of pregnant teenagers and teen-age parents were invited to Parent's Night on November 19, 1986 and Open House on May 13, 1987. The purpose of these meetings were to provide parents with information on the Teen Parent Center and to create a better atmosphere for the teen mother.		
The Teen Parent Center also held private meetings with parents, as required. Parents of clients were more willing to express feelings of guilt, anger, embarrassment, confusion, etc. in an individual session than in a group. A private session with the parent of a teen parent or pregnant teen client was more meaningful because the parent felt more secure in a private setting. Telephone calls were by far the most efficient way to initially discuss problems. When warranted, parents visited the Center.		

	Number Projected	Final Number
6. <u>Ensure placement for minimum of 30 participants in continued school or job.</u>	30	37

Each participant met with the coordinator to evaluate the model pilot program. Students' responses were overwhelmingly positive. Parents of participants equally supported the program.

Seniors were assisted with plans for job placement. Coordinator helped students with resume' writing, letters of application and interviewing techniques. Seniors who studied beauty culture will take the State Licensing exam in the near future. Coordinator will assist those students during the summer, as necessary. Also, seniors attended Piscataway's Job Fair, and many had interviews with potential employers, while one student was scheduled for job training after graduation.

Underclassmen, eligible and willing to work, were assisted with part-time placement. Middlesex County Vocational Schools has a limited number of work study programs open to students. In addition, many teen parents will work part-time in food service or telemarketing jobs during the summer.

Those students who had unsuccessfully completed subjects were assisted with plans for summer school. Others in need of HSPT remediation have available a special program at Middlesex County Vocational School in East Brunswick.

Coordinator will continue to assist clients during the summer with support services, job placement, etc.

	Number Projected	Final Number
7. <u>Reach out to target population through media and organizations that serve teen mothers to recruit 30 participants.</u>	60	60+
Teen Parent Center provided brochures with free admission tickets to enroll at Middlesex County Vocational Schools and contact with the Teen Parent Center to over 25 public schools in Middlesex County.		
Health, mental health, foster care, corrections, and social agencies also were informed of special services provided by the Teen Parent Center with brochures and free tickets.		
Coordinator publicized the services offered to pregnant teens and teenage parents on WCTC, the local radio station's "Community Needs" show. The hour long radio show allowed listeners to call the station with questions about the teen parent program.		
Also, the Middlesex County Vocational School's Newsletters featured articles on the Teen Parent Center. These newsletters circulated to hundreds of vocational education advocates.		
In addition, the Teen Parent Center advertised its services to potential clients and agencies with key tags, pens, take home bags and child care booklets.		

	Number Projected	Final Number
8. <u>Provide series of three workshops for 60 teens in community to increase their awareness of and participation in vocational training, better paying jobs and support services.</u>		
One workshop was presented in conjunction with Middlesex County Board of Social Services' Advance Adolescent Parent Program in the Life Skills and Improvement Workshop series. Entitled "Options for Life," the coordinator spoke to teen parent drop-outs about higher paying jobs for women with marketable skills in vocational areas, especially non-traditional jobs.	60	60+
A second workshop was presented to teen parents enrolled in the Mentors for Adolescent Parents Project, sponsored by the Middlesex-Somerset Chapter of the National Association of Black Social Workers in New Brunswick. Theme of the project is "Be All That You Can Be." Coordinator again stressed to teen parents that vocational training can lead to better paying jobs for women and that the Teen Parent Center offers the necessary support to make job training and economic self-sufficiency and attainable goal.		
Less formalized workshops were held at the pre-natal clinic at St. Peter's Medical Center. The coordinator visited the hospital several times and spoke to pregnant teenage drop-outs and pregnant students about re-enrollment in vocational programs or continued attendance in vocational school. Applications and information were disseminated.		
Throughout the '86-87 school year, the coordinator networked with many agency contacts for pregnant teens and adolescent parents. Social workers, day care directors, nurses, clinicians, health educators, etc., were invited to Middlesex County Vocational School in Piscataway to learn about the services of the Teen Parent Center and other special women's projects in the system that assist the single parent and homemaker, especially adolescent drop-outs. These workshop meetings provided community contacts with admissions applications for potential students, a knowledge of vocational training areas, a tour of the building and shops, etc. When possible, agency contacts accompanied teen parent drop-outs for a tour of the school and admission information.		

	Number Projected	Final Number
9. <u>Assist 30 workshop participants to enroll in vocational training.</u>		

30

30+

Teen parents clients were assisted with individual counseling, career planning and identification of needs. When a pregnant teen or teen parent enrolled in vocational school, the coordinator spent ample time with the client on the first interview. The client's academic and personal needs were assessed; previous grades and attendance records were reviewed; importance of staying in school until graduation was emphasized; and job training for economic self-sufficiency was stressed. Obstacles to receiving a diploma such as lack of child care or transportation were overcome. Coordinator continues working with teen parents and pregnant teens. Students receive educational support on a regular basis, and in some instances, on a daily basis when problems are acute.

During the summer months, more completed applications are expected in the guidance offices of the Middlesex County Vocational Schools. Future students need a completed application, interview and test for enrollment. Teen Parent Center provides continual outreach for new students.

In addition, single teen parents who already had a high school diploma were referred to the Women's Job Center for vocational training or other special programs offered by Middlesex County Vocational Schools.

Evaluation Summary

Successful use of the advisory committee provided a broad and solid network for the Teen Parent Center. Advisory committee members furnished valuable resources and supplemental information in areas related to life management and coping skills.

Support services such as the Teen Parent Center increased school completion and employability for adolescent parents and pregnant teens. Students received individual assessments at the beginning of the program or during time of enrollment. There was measurable and observable change between intake and the end of the year interview.

According to Teen Parent Center clients, the five most helpful services throughout the school year were child care assistance, school attendance support, information dissemination on the importance of a high school diploma and vocational training, coordinator's enthusiasm for the welfare of teen parents to become economically self-sufficient, and personalized attention and guidance.

Child care assistance motivated and enabled teen parent drop-outs to re-enroll in a vocational training program. Assistance with child care also enabled teen parents who were enrolled in vocational school at the beginning of the school year to remain in the program. With the exception of one teen parent who had serious family problems, contributing to poor school attendance, adolescent mothers who received child care felt a sense of obligation to attend vocational school on a regular, daily basis.

Although greater success in vocational training was achieved for teen mothers who enrolled at the beginning of the school year, pregnant teenagers who received home instruction about one month before delivery were able to continue successful completion of the school year when they re-enrolled with doctor's approval, usually six weeks after delivery. Transfer students also were able to enroll mid-year in vocational training without much description. However, adolescent parent drop-outs who enrolled mid-year in a diploma program were likely to incur problems with grades and attendance.

Teenage Parent Center made available to pregnant teens and teenage parents the necessary emotional and concrete support needed for successful completion of the school year. Support services such as child care assistance did not motivate young women to become pregnant. During the 1986-87 school year, the support services coordinator worked with over 75 pregnant teens, teen parents, and teens-at-risk of parenthood, and only one student (about 1%) became pregnant a second time. The majority of Teen Parent Center clients were already pregnant or parents at the start of the model pilot program.

Services such as transportation to and from school were able to be coordinated through existing resources rather than new funding. In cases where single adolescent parents had graduated or needed immediate job training without academic instruction, the support services coordinator made referrals to Special Women's Programs at Middlesex County Vocational Schools. The Women's Job Centers in Perth Amboy and New Brunswick assisted eligible students with transportation.

The support services coordinator performed intake and follow-up testing about clients' self-image, attitude, and expectations, etc. Students' responses to this new pilot program were overwhelmingly positive. Help, encouragement and support best described the elements that contributed to the success of the Teenage Parent Center. Improved self-image and attitude of teen parents were correlated to students' retention in the program.

A supportive home environment was important to clients' success during the school year. Meetings with parents of adolescent mothers and pregnant teens also improved communication in the home, as stated by parents. In extreme cases, referral to family counseling at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Rutger's Community Mental Health Center was welcomed by students and parents.

Students who had the support of two parents at home seemed to encounter less difficulties with grades and attendance than the majority of pregnant teens and teen parents who lived with one parent or relative(s). Lack of communication and understanding between student and parent seemed to be a factor contributing to pregnancy. In many cases, after the pregnant teen became a parent herself, she realized the responsibilities attached to parenthood and became grateful to her parent(s) for help and support. The adolescent parent's change in attitude also improved the chances of school completion. This is evidenced by only one repeated pregnancy during the school year. Only in obscure cases was parental involvement detrimental.

The expected target retention rate for pregnant teens and teenage parents was 25 of the original 30. The Teen Parent Center identified 42 students and retained 37 of them. Several seniors will complete the year at summer school and then will be eligible for their diplomas. Remaining seniors who graduated were assisted with job placement. Underclassmen (100%) have committed to re-enrollment for the next school year, and some will work part-time during the summer.

Outreach efforts performed by the coordinator were effective in increasing vocational training awareness and consequently, enrollment into a vocational training program. Contacts with community agency personnel were important outreach vehicles that promoted the need and availability for vocational training. In addition, workshops provided information to future students about vocational training, especially in non-traditional areas, and admission requirements of Middlesex County Vocational Schools.

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